

The New Plan for Iraq

War With Iran?

by Joseph E. Fallon

When President Bush announced, in a televised speech, that he was planning to deploy 21,500 additional troops to Iraq, he added an ominous aside:

Succeeding in Iraq also requires defending its territorial integrity and stabilizing the region in the face of extremist challenges. This begins with addressing Iran and Syria. These two regimes are allowing terrorists and insurgents to use their territory to move in and out of Iraq. Iran is providing material support for attacks on American troops. We will disrupt the attacks on our forces. We'll interrupt the flow of support from Iran and Syria. And we will seek out and destroy the networks providing advanced weaponry and training to our enemies in Iraq.

In light of the provocative actions the Bush administration has taken over the past year, these words cannot easily be dismissed as mere saber-rattling.

In March 2006, the State Department created an Office of Iranian Affairs, which, along with the Pentagon's new Iranian Directorate, is tasked with aggressively promoting regime change in Iran. Among those advising the Iranian Directorate are three former associates of the Pentagon's defunct Office of Special Plans—the same group that promoted the Iraq war on the basis of false or misleading information: Abram N. Shulsky, the OSP's former director; John Trigilio, a Defense Intelligence Agency analyst; and Ladan Archin, an Iran specialist.

In the April 17, 2006, issue of the *New Yorker*, in an article entitled "The Iran Plans: Would President Bush go to war to stop Tehran from getting the bomb?" Seymour Hersh wrote that U.S. troops are already in Iran and are "in position to mark the critical targets with laser beams, to insure bombing accuracy and to minimize civilian casualties." His source in the Pentagon also claimed that we had already begun "working with minority groups in Iran . . . to 'encourage ethnic tensions' and undermine the regime."

Plans continued apace through the end of last year. On September 30, 2006, the Iran Freedom Support Act, which provides financing for activities that promote regime change in Iran, was signed into law. Then, in late 2006, President Bush changed security policy in Iraq from a "catch and release" program (whereby U.S. forces would secretly capture Iranian "agents" in the country and detain them for a few days) to ordering that Iranian "agents" in Iraq be captured and held indefinitely, or killed.

In an effort to disrupt Iran's economy, on January 9 of this year, the Bush administration imposed sanctions on Bank Sepah, Iran's fifth-largest state-owned financial institution, alleging it

"is the financial linchpin of Iran's missile procurement network and has actively assisted Iran's pursuit of missiles capable of carrying weapons of mass destruction." Two days later, on January 11, U.S. troops violated international law protecting the immunity of diplomatic compounds, by storming Iran's consulate in Arbil in Iraqi Kurdistan and detaining five of its staff while confiscating computers and official documents.

In addition, significant military sea and air operations are now under way. To Iran's northwest, at the Incirlik Air Base in Turkey, the Pentagon has deployed F-16s that can deliver B61-11 nuclear bunker busters, which are theoretically capable of destroying Iran's underground nuclear facilities. To Iran's south, Patriot Air and Missile Defense Systems are now in place in Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain (where the U.S. Fifth Fleet, the naval arm of U.S. Central Command, is headquartered). The USS *Eisenhower* Strike Group is in the Persian Gulf, comprising the nuclear aircraft carrier *Dwight D. Eisenhower*, its Carrier Air Wing 7, Destroyer Squadron 28, the guided-missile cruiser USS *Anzio*, the guided-missile destroyers USS *Ramage* and USS *Mason*, and the attack submarine USS *Newport News*.

They are now being joined by the USS *Stennis* Carrier Strike Group, which consists of the nuclear aircraft carrier *John C. Stennis*, its Carrier Air Wing 9, Destroyer Squadron 21, the guided-missile cruiser USS *Antietam*, and the guided-missile destroyers USS *O'Kane*, USS *Preble*, and USS *Paul Hamilton*. The combined Carrier Air Wings of the two carrier strike groups allow air operations over a continuous 24-hour cycle. According to Flynt Leverett, former senior official in the CIA and the National Security Council, stationing two carrier strike groups in the Persian Gulf "provide[s] the necessary numbers and variety of tactical aircraft" for an attack against Iran.

In addition, the USS *Bataan* Expeditionary Strike Group, which consists of seven ships and includes helicopters and Harrier fighter jets, has been deployed to the Persian Gulf. A fourth flotilla of eight ships, the USS *Boxer* Expeditionary Strike Group, is nearby, in the Indian Ocean. Currently at sea and available for deployment to the Persian Gulf are USS *Nimitz* and three additional carrier strike groups: USS *Ronald Reagan*, USS *Harry S. Truman*, and USS *Theodore Roosevelt*.

Coordinating this military activity is the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM), one of the Pentagon's five geographically demarcated unified commands. Spanning 3,600 miles east-west and 4,600 miles north-south, its Area of Responsibility is larger than the continental United States. Of particular note, therefore, is President Bush's decision to pass over highly qualified U.S. Army and U.S. Marine Corps Combat Arms officers and appoint Adm. William J. Fallon to head USCENTCOM. Over its 24-year history, USCENTCOM has always been commanded by a general from either the Army or the

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Marine Corps—never an admiral. That is because USCENTCOM is a land-warfare command responsible for the land wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. At least initially, Admiral Fallon will likely be viewed by the staff as an outsider, and combat-arms officers will be wary of a Navy aviator leading Army operations. However, it is possible that Admiral Fallon was appointed not to lead land operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, for which he has limited experience, but to command the assembled naval forces in and around the Persian Gulf in a joint sea and air attack on Iran—an operation for which he is superbly qualified. Admiral Fallon gained extensive command experience in such operations in the Gulf War and Kosovo, and he is intimately familiar with the Persian Gulf region. As his official biography states, “He has served as Deputy Director for Operations, Joint Task Force, Southwest Asia in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.”

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With Admiral Fallon at the head of USCENTCOM and U.S. naval strike forces in the Persian Gulf, the Bush administration is in position to launch a massive air attack on Iran. The very magnitude of the likely area of attack ensures that it would not be a surgical strike. As *Time* reported in its September 17, 2006, issue,

A Pentagon official says that among the known sites there are 1,500 different “aim points,” which means the campaign could well require the involvement of almost every type of aircraft in the U.S. arsenal: Stealth bombers and fighters, B-1s and B-2s, as well as F-15s and F-16s operating from land and F-18s from aircraft carriers.

Given that Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has refused to promise that the White House would consult Congress before attacking Iran, if there is to be an attack, the Bush administration may seek to provoke a Gulf of Tonkin incident. It could then claim that Iran fired the first shot, in order to justify launching a “retaliatory” attack. The immediate aim would be to force the Democratic-controlled Congress to provide all necessary funding for a war to destroy Iran’s nuclear program and neutralize her military capabilities. In so doing, the Bush administration would hope that ensuing political instability would allow ethnic minorities (Arabs, Azeris, Baluchis, Kurds, and Turkmen) to dismember the state or opposition parties to overthrow the government—in other words, regime change.

Judging by U.S. air campaigns in North Vietnam and Yugoslavia—and, more recently, by Israel’s attack on Lebanon—such an attack would result in significant civilian casualties, which could, in turn, unify Iranians in an outpouring of patriotic support for their government. It would be com-

parable to what occurred in this country following September 11. The Iranian opposition, ethnic secessionists, and political dissidents would be discredited as fifth columnists. And the Muslim world, from Morocco to Malaysia, would be inflamed against the United States.

What, then, is the purpose of increasing troop levels in Iraq by 21,500, if the President plans to attack Iran? The “Surge” is a political, not a military, action, designed to justify previous policy, show determination to remain in Iraq, and circumvent the recommendations of the bipartisan Iraq Study Group.

The overall failure in the strategy of the Bush administration, of which the “Surge” is but one example, is in its refusal to accept the concept of Fourth Generation Warfare—war between a state and a nonstate actor. The Bush strategy denies that insurgencies arise from, and are sustained by, local populations. Instead, the administration is convinced that an insurgency is dependent upon some other state. In the case of the Iraqi insurgency, that state is Iran. The Bush administration may believe that, by neutralizing Iran’s military capabilities, it can defeat the Iraqi insurgents.

The assumption that Iran is sponsoring the insurgency in Iraq is false. First, the insurgents are Sunnis who seek to reestablish the political hegemony of the Sunni minority. Iran is Shiite and supports the right of the Shiite majority that we brought to power in Iraq. Iran is not going to arm Sunnis to suppress Shiites. Second, if Iran were arming Shiites to attack U.S. troops, they would be attacking U.S. troops. Instead, the Shiite militias are killing Sunnis. With the Shiites now in power in Iraq, the only way to foment a Shiite insurgency would be if we attacked Iran. Such an attack would be viewed by Iraqi Shiites as an assault on Shia Islam.

Even without a Shiite insurgency, the “Surge” plan has serious flaws. To begin with, an increase in troops to over 160,000—bringing us back to levels we have had in Iraq before—is no surge. Besides, if “victory” was beyond our reach with 250,000 troops on the ground (the original invasion force), it is not likely to be achieved with fewer—particularly if the additional troops are not being provided additional armored vehicles.

The primary focus of the “Surge” is to pacify Baghdad. However, in the past, when more troops were deployed to that city, violence only increased. The “Surge” doubles the number of U.S. troops for security operations in Baghdad. That brings the number of military personnel up to 15,000 for an operation that, according to the force ratios established by the U.S. Army Manual for Counterinsurgency, requires 120,000. According to the Bush strategy, the difference will be made up by Iraqi troops—Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds. Yet Kurdish soldiers are refusing to be deployed to Baghdad, and, if Iran is attacked, Iraqi Shiite soldiers may well turn on U.S. troops.

Currently, U.S. troops rely on a supply line from Kuwait for virtually everything—food, fuel, ammo, and medicine. If Iran is attacked, that supply line will be cut—by a general Shiite uprising, armed Shiite militias, Iran’s Revolutionary Guard, or all of the above. U.S. outposts would be overrun, and Baghdad, encircled, rendering a mass retreat (*à la* Saigon, 1975) impossible. At that point, the Bush administration will have run out of options. They would be unable to resupply the beleaguered troops or bring in additional troops and armor to end the siege quickly. Nor could they bomb their way to victory without killing U.S. troops along with the insurgents and civilians. Instead of Saigon, Baghdad would resemble Dien Bien Phu, 1954. c

The Courage to Live

by Ewa Thompson

“Often the test of courage is not to die but to live.”

—Vittorio Alfieri, *Oreste* (1785)

The Collected Poems: 1956-1998
by Zbigniew Herbert
New York: Ecco Press; 600 pp., \$34.95

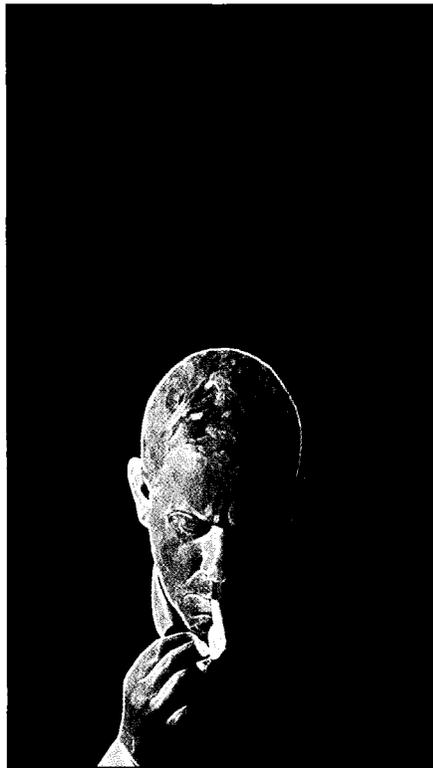
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This volume is the first complete English translation of Zbigniew Herbert's poetry—a cause for rejoicing. And, although Alissa Valles's translations are a bit gray, as if sprinkled with fine dust, they are invariably precise and never overstated. While there is more sonorousness in the original Polish, and I like some of the earlier translations by the Milosz-Scott-Carpenter teams, this volume's completeness weighs heavily in its favor. The notes, chronology, and index help navigation considerably.

Zbigniew Herbert, a Polish poet, died in 1998 of causes attributable to poverty. The T.S. Eliot Award for Creative Writing, which he gratefully received from the Ingersoll Foundation in 1995, brightened his final years somewhat, but it could not undo the circumstances in which he spent his youth and middle age. Poverty shortens lives in ways that are not always traceable. Score one more point for that great Darkness that came from the East.

Years ago, Leopold Tyrmand told me that Herbert should have received the Nobel Prize, and I heartily agreed. But there was no mighty society of friends standing behind him: He never lived near the centers of power and came from an unprestigious country. Still, he had a

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following in America, and hundreds of people on American campuses recited his poetry; there was a Mr. Cogito Press (named after one of Herbert's poetic alter egos) somewhere in Oregon at one time; and his collections of poetry have been reviewed in all the journals that possess the correct zip codes. In Soviet-occupied Poland, he was one of the points of light that appear so unexpectedly and against all odds among Poles in all epochs of history. His literary debut was delayed until 1956, when he was 32, because he did not wish to enter a Devil's deal with the regime. His consecutive volumes of poetry were snatched from bookstores by Polish students the way that pop stars' CDs are in today's America. He was adored by the left and the right, and it is said that Adam Michnik—the leftist Polish intellectual (now a neocon) who, in the 1990's, did his best to destroy Herbert's reputation—

once fell on his knees before him. After the suppression of Solidarity by the Moscow-controlled government of Poland in 1981, Herbert continued to publish in *Tygodnik Solidarność* (*Solidarity Weekly*). Angered by the fraternizing of the Polish neocons such as Michnik (who had moved from the leftist to the neocon position, just as many Americans did) with the ex-communists, he criticized them, and they retaliated devastatingly in Michnik's daily *Gazeta Wyborcza*, which, through the cat's paws of its writers, suggested that Herbert wrote himself out or even lost his marbles.

The necessity to go into these details illustrates the difficulty of writing about the great literary figures who are unsupported by common knowledge of their countries' literary and intellectual history. This is what Edward Said had in mind when he lamented the “orientalist” ways of Western intellectuals pontificating on countries whose language and history they do not know, instructing those who know even less. The texture of allusions, memories, connotations, and nuances can only be lamely recreated even by those who lived in the poet's country; here, I am trying to do precisely this.

How best then to describe Herbert to those who do not know him? Imagine T.S. Eliot conceiving *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets* in a Soviet-controlled country, while being exposed to the “invigorating knowledge that we are alone” (“September 17,” Herbert's poem referring to the Soviet Union's attack on Poland two weeks after the Nazi attack of September 1, 1939). Eliot had to come to terms with the Prufrocks, with typists who